11 Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

have the necessary time to prepare the cassava. A man cannot count on finding food to buy. Food is often scarce and, especially when crops have not been good—a state of affairs these Bush Negroes know only too well—each household has need of all the food it has grown.

Asikanu, whose cassava bread was fresh, bathed in the river and changed his dripping loin cloth, spreading out the one he had removed so that it might dry. Bayo washed his second best cloth, for the sun was strong, and it was well to get it fresh and uncreased. So the men busied themselves getting their supplies in order for the journey which was not yet taxing, but would grow more difficult during the next few days, with heavy rapids, great distances between villages, and more exertion needed to strike a village before dark overtook them.

Even so it was time to be off, Sedefo decided, replacing the cassava cakes—which in a few moments had lost their mold—for the next rapids were something to be reckoned with. Again the four dugouts were on their way, and it was a brave sight to see the four pole-men swinging their long sticks with measured regularity, and the upward leaping three steps, and the down-running steps, and the seated paddlers dipping their carved blades into the water with a slight twist at the end of each stroke to counteract the effect of the push of the man at the bow, to keep the canoe headed straight into the current.

Ahead, in the leading canoe, the man at the bow waved his hand to us, indicating directions to our men. We could see him put the whole length of his pole in the water three times, then lay it along the gunwale of his dugout and, taking up his paddle, begin to stroke in time with the man at the stern of his boat.

"*Mfundu*," said Bayo to Bibifo. "Deep."

As we approached the deep water, Bayo with a fillip of his paddle sent our dugout heading into the stream, to be caught up by the current at the center and taken down and across by the impact of the water against the boat. The boats in front had done the same, had cut across to the

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

of a burning fire without being harmed. Bathing every day for nine days in water in which rusty scrap iron and peanut husks have been boiled renders a man impervious to the cut of a knife and his flesh capable of turning any blade. Stomach-ache is treated by drinking an infusion from the hollow handle of a dance rattle. Especially potent in all magic preparations are the bristles of *tamanua*, the anteater. *Obeiah watra*, another infusion, is drunk by men before going into the bush, to give them luck and strength. It is also possible to acquire strength or other virtues by rubbing one's body with the putrescent fluid gathered from the corpse of a dead man who possessed those qualities.

If a person should find fecal material in front of his hut or rotten eggs along the trail in such position as to make it likely for him to step upon it, it is certain that this material was placed there by a member of the community who is attempting to *wissi* or bewitch him. Anyone who removes this matter is liable to insanity.

Minor cuts and wounds may be treated with the bark of the *aproconyo* tree. This is ground up and mixed with the brew prepared from the leaves known as *pekein fol caca* (little rooster).

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

164 The Djukas suffer from a number of diseases also common among white men. Yaws, a syphilis-like disease, caused by infection with *Spironema pertenue*, is frequently found among them. Individuals may be seen suffering from all three stages of it. Malaria, including the severe tropical form, is spread by the mosquitoes along the rivers. An ulcerous condition known as leishmaniasis, the result of infection by Leishman-Donovan bodies, is an ordinary occurrence, as is hookworm. The Town Negroes are occasionally infected with filariasis and schistosomyasis of the rectal type. Leprosy is present in the town of Paramaribo, but we saw none of it in the bush.

646 757 [515] [304] The Djukas do not fear to take the bahkra's medicine. The gratitude of more than one mother was earned when we gave her child castor oil. Of the principle of asepsis, naturally, the Djukas know nothing. Their incisions for making *cutty-cutty* (ornamental scars) are septic enough to give a bacteriologist nightmares.

On one occasion, snakee-kutti, the snake protector, did not work, and a Bush Negro, who had been bitten was taken to the hospital at Moengo. His leg had gone untreated for five days and was in the serious stage of gangrene. The limb was amputated by the doctor in charge and the Djuka made an uneventful recovery. He would not have been brought to the hospital by his family if there had been anything more for the Bush Negro medicine man to do. But there was not, and they went to the bahkra as the last resort to save his life.

778 756 Far up the Surinam River is the sacred medicine city of Dahomey (pronounced Daumay). Into its sacred precincts

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8

and pageantry. Now it is only a name. But the name has been 778
carried overseas to the South American bush, and persists
there long after its origin has been forgotten.

As has already been noted, the villages are universally 364
clean and sanitary. There is no filth or debris scattered about.
The garbage is disposed of by being thrown into the river
at a point below the village. A small amount of it is fed to
the chickens, which we found in practically every Bush
Negro village. Feces are disposed of in small outhouses made
of leaves placed on bypaths some four hundred yards from
the village clearing. When these become seriously polluted,
they are removed to another location. Some villages have no
outhouses.

Bathing is indulged in frequently by all of the Bush Ne- 515
groes. There are few who do not bathe in the river two or
three times a day. No bodily odour could be detected on
them, except one of perspiration, when the men poled their
canoes for long distances and did not have time to bathe at
their accustomed hours.

Sometimes as a punishment a woman may be condemned 681
to act as scavenger for the village for as long as two years;
it is then her duty to be continually cleaning up the village.

/16 cont./

868 The children learn their dances and games at a very early
858 age and are always present at the festivals.

867 From earliest youth on they are taught to respect and
689 venerate older persons. offenses against this obligatory respect are severely punished.

868 The boys in particular are taken along to the forest at an early age and remain there in connection with the processing of wood or other operations, as well as for hunting and fishing, and very quickly learn to swim.

515 Men, women, and children bathe separately in the river every day.

Chapter XI

Burial Services and Other Ceremonies

764 They celebrate the burial services with great solemnity. If one of them dies in Auca, that is, their land, then the corpse is cleaned, the nails are cut, and it is placed in a coffin, in which various and especially costly articles of clothing of the deceased are placed and to which all the relatives also add a new piece of cloth (usually blankets and pantjes) as remembrances, a farewell token on which much value is placed. Hence they always take care to have a sufficient stock of new and unused cloths.

Ordinarily the corpse lies in the open coffin for one day before the interment takes place, in order to bid it farewell. The relatives then sit around the coffin and weep ceaselessly /17/ in a mostly singsong manner peculiar to them, in which the visitors also join from time to time.

765 After the interment the closest blood relatives proceed to hold the days of mourning on a mat spread out on the ground for [538] eight days. During this time they weep loudly by turns, at the same time making the strangest gestures, while day and night, generally by turns, little stories with many allusions, and always ending with a moral solution, are told.

/513/

The scarcity of lipide foods, and, among the Boni, the low consumption of fruit might cause one to fear vitamin deficiencies. In fact, there are no signs of it.

Body hygiene is excellent; Blacks and Indians bathe several times a day and are very fastidious about their persons.

In summary, there is no appreciable difference in the customary activities, agriculture, hunting, and fishing, of the two populations. There is one in economic activity. Among the Boni, who have a greater need for imported objects, the adult men work for wages four to five months per year on the average. These jobs are very laborious and performed under bad dietary conditions, whereas the Indians rest when they are not occupied with their customary tasks, sometimes spending entire days stretched out in the hammock.

The two populations have been in close contact for a long time. The Indian villages farthest downstream have immediate contact with the first crop plantings of the Boni. Without having any tendency to merge (their characters and their customs are too different), Boni and Oayana have maintained regular relations since the end of the eighteenth century, doing a little trade in imported articles exchanged for hammocks and dogs trained for hunting. They often visit each other, and nothing stops the spread of illness from the one group to the other.

In fact, the way of life of the two groups is the same, the environmental conditions have the same influence, and the differences which are observed in the pathology can only be attributed to a different sensitivity with regard to the principal illnesses.

Pathology of the Boni. We shall briefly summarize here the observations of Dr. A. Sausse in his work Populations primitives du Maroni.

The pathology of the Boni is characterized by:

-- a resistance to malaria, which means that if the children have bad attacks an immunity will develop with age; the size of the spleen diminishes regularly from child to adult. The adults have only episodical attacks which are not serious; in particular

/122 cont./

845 [621] Observation at Maripasoula, November 3, 1956. The wife of Baïna, boatman of the border-fixing mission, gave birth at Pikin Tabiki, small farming village where she works with her mother and the latter's husband. Baïna went to be present at the delivery.

It was very long and dramatic. According to Baïna, an ogi sani had entered the child's body, making him stiff and impossible to extract. As a last resort they called a neighbor, T.... known for having a good gita. He called his gadu who revealed an efficacious remedy, since after the body of the sick woman was bathed with the prescribed leaves, the delivery ended successfully.

846 [515] Since we were leaving on our trip, it remained to find someone to take his place in fulfilling one of the husband's duties: cutting the supply of wood for heating the water necessary for the hot douches /showers?/ the mother was going to be given several times a day for about three months. [465] He made an agreement for that with Kwata, his mother-in-law's husband, to whom he will pay about 1,000 francs.

851 613 [603] Presentation of the child. On the eighth day the maternal grandmother (or great-grandmother if she is still living) takes the child and gives it to another ancestress of the same lineage, stationed in front of the house. The latter presents it to the family. Then [769] [778] [782] the head of the lineage, without taking the child, goes to the fraga tiki to make an offering of tafia, asking the ancestors to protect it.

For example, for the birth of A ... (Lapé Tabiki village), son of O Yundu (L2, G60), it was Asakundu, grandmother of Yundu and great-grandmother of the child, who came to take him in the house and gave him over to her sister Zérésa (L2, E57) to present him to the family (see genealogical table of the Lapé lineage, fraction 2).

/18o cont./

765 264 [613] Fintiman directs the ceremony. He divides all these dishes without distinction of origin into several lots, one for each lineage.

• [515] All the guests go down to the wharf to wash in the river, then put on new clothes before participating in the ceremonial meal.

[613] The people of each lineage go to eat on their side; a bowl is carried to the people in mourning, like Alémin, who remain confined at home. But the near relatives of the three dead for whom mourning is going to be lifted take part in the ceremony.

765 About four o'clock the women are seen to appear again, carrying a small bowl of rice accompanied by a little fish and peanut sauce. They put them down on the ground at the edge of the mortuary shed.

Banana leaves are arranged at the edge of the shed (north wall, on the side facing the river).

The elders, seated on their little benches, gather together in a half circle. Fintiman and Bukuman take a little from each bowl, spread it out on the banana leaves. They call by name the dead for whom mourning is being lifted, Béniti and the young boys Tito and G..., speaking to them in a familiar conversational tone as if to living people whom one invited to eat.

Several persons come to eat a little of the food.

At 5:00 P.M. Fintiman has five small boys of five to seven years line up, each provided with a basin, in front of the food spread out on the ground. At a given signal they rush forward, each one carrying away what he could cover with his basin. They leave a little of it, which will stay there all night. The next day the left-overs from the buffet prepared for the living will be added to it.

/210 cont./

776 [825] The Bumba gadu, other gods of the same nature and equally feared, have as bearers other categories of snakes, principally the great anaconda water snakes.

[984] [812] The Vɔɔdũ, we have said, are feared; they can exercise on a lineage the collective curse called kunu. But, no more than the Kumẽnti do not represent a principle of good, they do not represent a principle of evil. Not all are so badly disposed toward men, and even if one of them is the enemy of a lineage, it is not for that reason badly disposed toward the rest of men.

787 178 [562] However this may be, the cult of possession of the Papa gadu is not at all in decline among the Boni. According to the cross-checking we have been able to do, of the 670 persons living on the French bank there are at least 40 to 50 who have a Papa gadu, the great majority of them old women.

787 784 /211/ The Voodũ /sic/ are much feared, and for that very reason much respected. They are oracles which are consulted very often, without consideration of the evil their kunu has done and will still do. A god which exercises the kunu but which is provisionally declared appeased may be consulted without danger; it is always assumed that in any case its bearer, if he respects its commands, has nothing to fear from it.

789 562 It is possible that, very unconsciously, women use the fear that the Papa gadu gods inspire in order to maintain their independence and privileged position in Refugee Black society.

153 79 789 [198] [178] [515] [824] [534] Instruction in possession appears to take as a pattern the same principles as that which correspond to the Kumẽnti. It involves the teaching of the Papa language; this language appeared to us to be in decline; in fact, it is used only for formulas of greeting; then the possessed people vaticinate in ordinary language. Instruction in possession also involves daily ablutions with decoctions of leaves; certain of these mixtures are particularly complicated (it is said that they include more than a hundred different kinds of leaves). Instruction is essentially individual; however it also includes dances; on this occasion a

/249 cont./

751 [787] Possession by a Kumẽnti gives, they say, invulnerability during the time of the trance, but in his ordinary state the individual remains vulnerable (they say only that in case of danger the gita "rises" immediately).

Someone who has a man nẽŋga ɔbia has no trances of possession, but they state that he is permanently invulnerable (except for breaking of the kina). In order to obtain this ɔbia one must have himself "washed" for a very long time by an elder who knows the leaves in question. He delivers them already crushed so that no one may be able to know this secret outside of the son or nephew to whom he bequeaths it.

It is necessary to continue to be washed four times a year for 15 days each time, to keep up the force of the ɔbia.

[515] During these 15 days one bathes three times a day, in secret (in principle nobody knows that you have this ɔbia).

[834] During these periods one must have no relation with a woman, even to talk to her.

They state that someone who has a man nẽŋge ɔbia can be struck by blows of a machete and even receive a gunshot with impunity.

[173] They believe that this ɔbia, in the past called man feti ɔbia, was obtained by the ancestors at the time of the wars against the whites; still today it inspires an unshakeable confidence. /250/ In October, 1952 we saw M..., a man of 45 [164] [754] with great good sense, make a deep gash in his leg while cutting a liana, in spite of his ɔbia. Doubt did not cross his mind for a second: he told us that certainly he had unknowingly eaten something contrary to the kina of the ɔbia. Since we were working near some villages, he went immediately to find the master of the remedy to have the power restored. For nothing in the world would he have left for a long round of work in the bush with the feeling that he was at the mercy of an accident.